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LETTER DATED 14 SEPTEMBER 1996 FROM THE CHARGE D'AFFAIRES A.I. OF THE PERMANENT MISSION OF ZAIRE TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

On instructions from my Government, I have the honour to transmit to you a communiqué concerning events that have been taking place since 31 August 1996 in South Kivu province in eastern Zaire, following armed attacks by Banyamulenge from Rwanda crossing through Burundian territory.

The Government of the Republic of Zaire draws the attention of the Secretary-General and the Security Council to the gravity of the situation, which could lead to widespread confrontations unless strong pressure is brought to bear on the neighbouring republics of Rwanda and Burundi in order to make them abandon their acts of deliberate provocation.

I should be grateful if you would have this letter and its annex circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) LUKABU KHABOUJI N'ZAJI
Charge d'affaires a. i.
Minister Plenipotentiary
Deputy Permanent Representative

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Annex

Government communiqué concerning the situation of Banyamulenge in South Kivu

1. Contrary to the information disseminated today, Thursday, 12 September 1996, by certain international media, principally the British Broadcasting Corporation, concerning the alleged persecution of the Banyamulenge population and members of Catholic and Protestant religious orders by elements of the Zairian armed forces acting on instructions from the Zairian authorities, the Government of the Republic of Zaire wishes to inform both national and international opinion of the following.

1.1 The events that are currently taking place in South Kivu on the Ruzizi plain in the area of Uvira involve armed confrontations between the Zairian armed forces and armed bands of Banyamulenge from Rwanda who make use of Burundian territory to attack Zaire.

1.2 Inquiries and interrogations conducted with detainees reveal that approximately 3,000 young Banyamulenge nationals living in Zaire informed the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) last year that they were refugees; they were repatriated to Rwanda where they were subsequently enlisted in the Rwandan Patriotic Army and trained to destabilize eastern Zaire.

The strategy of the sponsors of this project is to use these elements, who are completely familiar with Zairian territory, to exploit the hostility that exists in relations between the Banyamulenge and the local Zairian population on the subject of nationality, with a view to fomenting unrest in eastern Zaire.

1.3 The Banyamulenge elements have been responsible, from 31 August 1996 to today, for several violations of Zairian territory that resulted in casualties among the Zairian population.

1.4 These acts were conducted from Rwandan and Burundian territory.

1.5 Turning to the confessions, the Banyamulenge apprehended by the Zairian armed forces stated that the attackers had logistical support from certain United Nations agencies, foreign non-governmental organizations and the Rwandan, Burundian and Ugandan armies. The quality of the military equipment and communications seized from them provides ample proof of this fact.

2. The Government of the Republic of Zaire notes with disappointment that this aggression is taking place after Prime Minister Kengo Wa Dondo's August visit to Kigali in order to seek a peaceful and lasting solution to the crisis in the Great Lakes region, through the unconditional repatriation of all Rwandan refugees in Zaire.

3. The Government of the Republic of Zaire is also surprised to learn that this aggression is being perpetrated after the Prime Minister's talks with high-level UNHCR officials in Geneva on 30 August 1996. During the talks, all the misunderstandings concerning the Kigali accords were resolved and the commitment of the two parties to do everything possible to ensure their implementation was reaffirmed.

4. The Government of the Republic of Zaire denounces and strongly condemns the behaviour of Rwanda and Burundi which, through their participation in the aggression being conducted by the Banyamulenge against Zaire, are violating the existing accords.

5. The Government of the Republic of Zaire considers them to be fully responsible for the inevitable consequences of these premeditated acts.

6. The Government of the Republic of Zaire also draws the attention of the Secretary-General and the Security Council to the behaviour of certain Member States that have a presence in the area, which have been increasing insecurity in the Great Lakes region with a view to destabilizing Zaire, and, at the international level, have been engaging in a disinformation campaign on behalf of obscure interests with a view to tarnishing our country's image.

Kinshasa, 13 September 1996

(Signed) Gérard KAMANDA Wa KAMANDA